



Fall 2011

# Confluence News



Vol. 26 No.1

*Friends of Fort Union/Fort Buford*

## Not even rain, sleet nor snow can shut down Fort Union... for long!

Historically, bad weather was common at Fort Union, just as North Dakota is now known for its weather extremes; blisteringly hot summers to the deep freeze of winter. Although, this past winter and spring weather may have given even the stalwart employees of the UMO pause. Typically our region receives about 40 inches of snow per year, by the end of December we had already received 54.2 inches. "It honestly seemed like we had a storm every weekend, it just never stopped," says Park Ranger Lisa Sanden "thankfully our maintenance department worked overtime to keep the Fort's parking lots and walkways open for both staff and visitors." By April it looked like the region would not quite break the longstanding 1895-1896 record of 94.7 inches of snow. However winter had one last trick in store for our region, the April 30 blizzard. The blizzard raged for a full day leaving roads impassable from snowfall accumulations and stuck vehicles. Miles of power lines fell leaving most residents of the area without power. This storm pushed the region into the record books at 107.2 inches of snowfall. The Fort survived the storm quite well, only a few broken tipi poles and an uprooted gate stop were damaged, although the fort closed for

*(Continued on page 2)*



The aftermath of the April 30th Blizzard. Drifts topped 10 feet along the walkway up to the Fort. The only way to move that much snow was to 1st shovel out the tractor!



Maintenance Worker Ken Anderson (in front on the sidewalk) is a little over six feet tall. Maintenance Worker Dave Zethryn (on top of the snowdrift) shows how packed and wet the snow was.



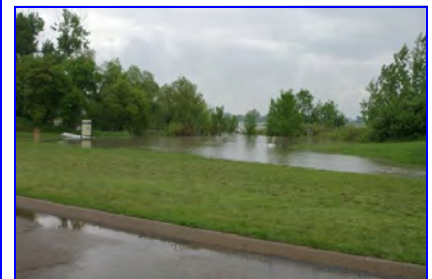
June 21, 2011, river at 30.48 feet (Major Flood Stage)



September 24, 2011, river at 20.42 feet



One consolation is it was easy for visitors at Fort Union to imagine a steamboat tied up the front bank.



Luckily, the only flooding that occurred at Fort Union was contained in the lower parking lot. Unfortunately this occurred during Rendezvous.

(Continued from page 1)

3 days due to electrical outages and hazardous roads.

This blizzard is very similar to a blizzard endured by Rudolph Fredrick Kurz on April 12, 1852, which he rode out in a tent! *"I spent another utterly miserable day yesterday. We were thrown into disquiet and confusion by a frightful windstorm that howled unceasingly and swept the prairie with a roar like distant thunder, carrying snow before it. Once more, the sunny sky became dark and the air with rain, or snow, or hail. Not one of us found it possible to stand upright in the storm; it was necessary to secure the tent further by weighting down the tent cover with tree stems."*

But, after winter had finally past there was no rest from the weather. The exceedingly heavy snowfall mixed with the 4<sup>th</sup> wettest spring on record swelled the Missouri River from bank to bank, causing overland flooding in much of our area. The river is typically quite shallow and major flood stage begins at 26 feet. By June 18<sup>th</sup> the river rose to 30.48 feet and stayed high until early August. Again Fort Union escaped mostly unscathed, only the Lewis and Clark River Trail was completely inundated and portions of our lower parking lot flooded. Historically a flood like this may have been a boom to transportation on the Upper Missouri, a sustained flood or June rise would have made the Missouri navigable for steamboats until early August. Although by all the snags (typically uprooted cottonwood trees) and the ever moving sandbars park staff spotted navigation still would have been quite hazardous.

# 2012 Fur Trade Symposium

**Celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Astorians at the Museum of the Mountain Man in Pinedale Wyoming, September 5-8, 2012, at the 2012 Fur Trade Symposium.**

To sign up for mail list send your name, mailing address and email to [2012@MMMuseum.com](mailto:2012@MMMuseum.com) or call 1-877-686-6266

## A CALL FOR ABSTRACTS:

In commemoration of the 200th anniversary of John Jacob Astor and his Pacific Fur Company (1810 to 1812), the Museum of the Mountain Man, Sublette County Historical Society, will host a four-day Fur Trade Symposium from Wednesday, September 5th through Saturday, September 8th, 2012.

The call for abstracts is open to fur trade scholars, historians and enthusiasts. Subject material must be related to the Astorians, John J. Astor, the routes to and from the mouth of the Columbia River or other relevant associated material. Final paper selections will be made from appropriate abstracts.

Submissions may be made to The Museum of the Mountain Man, PO Box 909, Pinedale, Wyoming 82941 or by e-mail to: [journal@mmmuseum.com](mailto:journal@mmmuseum.com).  
Deadline for submissions is June 1, 2011.



# Rendezvous 2011



## Rendezvous 2011 was an outstanding success!

Featured presenter John Curry spun tales and connected the Kentucky Long Hunter to the Mountain Men through skills shared between the two generations. The Kentucky Long Hunters attained and learned the skills and abilities to live in a remote area far away from civilization with only their rifle. Living off the land while hunting deer and tanning hides. These Long Hunters of the 1870s are only a generation away from the Mountain Men of the early 1820-1830s. The Mountain Men lived very similar lives in the western US. They lived far away from any settlements and trapped beaver. The motivations for both of these generations of men were the same, profit. A poor uneducated man could become very wealthy in a short time with hard work and good luck.



Photos from left to right:

Rendezvous presenters John Curry and Fort Hunter Chris Floyd. Fort Union Muzzleloader Rod Lassey demonstrates traditional hide tanning. Traders Row was again a popular destinations for many visitors. Voyager Jeff Brown talks to visitors about the hardships of the mangeurs du lard, or 'pork-eaters.' Photos courtesy Kris Baxter

Other events for visitors included Traders Row, filled with tents selling period appropriate items of all kinds, from trade beads to buffalo hide moccasins. As well Park volunteers and reenactors demonstrated pe-

*(Continued on page 4)*





(Continued from page 3)

ried skills such as a post hunter, voyager, brain tanning, muzzleloader gun firing demonstrations and blacksmithing. It was a fun and exciting weekend for both visitors and period reenactors alike.



Photos from left to right: A group of weary travelers gather for rest and talks. Blacksmith Tom Brown teaching apprentice Taylor Baxter the art of Blacksmithing. Bottom Dutch oven cooking at Rendezvous. photos courtesy Kris Baxter.

## Rendezvous 2011- Kids Day



Chief Ranger Loren Yellow Bird, Park Ranger David Carr and Volunteer Ron Garritson demonstrate a trade scene

The Thursday of Rendezvous has become a magnet for local families and daycares via the park's popular Kids Day activities. This year we had 6 stations manned by both park staff and volunteers. Children could participate in a myriad of activities including coloring on a paper buffalo robe, playing traditional American Indian games and learning Indian Sign Language.



Park Ranger Jonathan Cooper teaches kids how to make medicine bags.



Park Ranger Dave Carr teaches traditional Indian Sign Language.



Park Volunteer Mike Schweitzer referees a rousing game of Shiny Ball.



Park Ranger Woody Searle reads traditional stories in the site's new 22 foot Tipis.

# Rendezvous Run 2011 - Billy Mills 1964 Olympic Gold Medalist

Racing has a long history at Fort Union. In the 1850's fur trade clerk Edward Denig recorded two of the tribes who raced at Fort Union, "Foot racing is often practiced by the Mandan and Crows."



During Fort Union's Rendezvous Run sponsored by American State Bank, the Park had a special presenter, 1964's Olympic Gold Medalist Billy Mills. Billy Mills is an enrolled member of the Lakota tribe and the only American gold medalist in the 10,000 meters. Mills visited with participants in the Rendezvous Run, help start the race and presented awards.

After the race he presented a program on his story growing up Lakota and training for the Olympics which he used the theme of Perceptions. During his trip to the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games Mills spoke of meeting other Olympic champions and talking to them such as Scott Pippen of the famed

US Basketball Dream Team. He also spoke of the final lap during the 1964 Olympic 10,000 meter race which came down to the world record holder at that time Ron Clark of Australia, Mohammed Gammoudi of Tunisia and himself. As he talked about the race, at one point during the final lap Mills recalled about saying to himself, "I can do this." Finding the inner strength when he saw an eagle on one of the other runner's shirts it reminded him of his past and his heritage. This pushed him to run faster until he won the race. Later he mentioned that looking again at the shirt of the other runner, the eagle was gone. Mills stayed around after his presentation and talked to visitors as well as had his picture taken.





# Summer at the Confluence and Ft Buford



The summer season opened May 15th with the Flag Raising ceremony with the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry on site to assist.



This season we hosted several popular History Alive programs by Arch Ellwein.



The Confluence Center started the “Artist of the Month” program which give area artists and craftsman the chance to showcase their art at the Confluence for a month. We have enjoyed the talents of Professor Sharon Cox from Jamestown College, Brock Drenth paintings, Quilting by the Confluence Quilters, Ironworks by Paul and Joan Eldridge, the photography of Rebecca Helm, art and photography by Linda Severson and Patti Cundiff, paintings of Clark on the Yellowstone by Linda Conradsen and watercolors by Arlene Reidle, Linda Sullivan, Char Small and Onesti Krieger.



In June, Ft Buford welcomed the arrival of the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. These gentlemen traveled from Arkansas and Missouri to give demonstrations on saber fighting and other battlefield techniques.

# Summer at the Confluence and Ft Buford

## The Return of Sitting Bull



The Confluence and Ft Buford celebrated the 130th anniversary of the Return of Sitting Bull. Guests for this historic event included Ernie La Pointe, the great grandson of Sitting Bull and his wife. Mr. La Pointe gave a talk on the Life of Sitting Bull. Books and DVD's by Ernie La Pointe are available at the Confluence Center in the Gift Shop.

Also sharing in this event were Kevin Locke on Music and Dance of the Native American, Dakota Goodhouse on the Winter Count, Arch Ellwein as Captain Grant Marsh, and Cheaper Than Therapy an acapella quartet from Jamestown.

### Other Events:

On September 10th The Confluence and Ft Union hosted a Fall Bird count and photo contest.

Monthly activities included Quilting at the Confluence, Ft Buford Book Club and a variety of concerts.



The summer season came to a close on September 15th with the Flag Lowering ceremony with the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry.

## Upcoming Event at Fort Buford



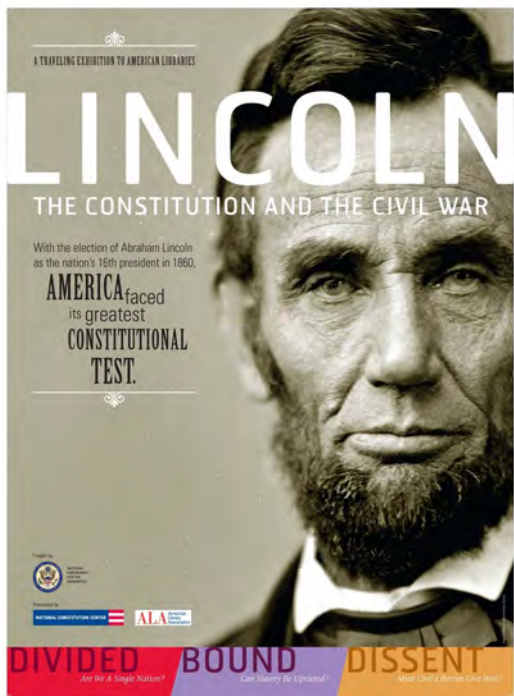
October will bring the stories of the ghosts of Ft Buford Cemetery to life. On October 22<sup>nd</sup> 7-9pm CDT we will have the annual Cemetery Walk. This is an evening of visits by some of the inhabitants of the Ft Buford Cemetery.

Photo courtesy Kris Baxter



# New Temporary Exhibit Coming to the Missouri Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center

**Lincoln : the Constitution and the Civil War**  
**October 6, 2011 – February 12, 2012**



With the election of Abraham Lincoln as the nation's 16<sup>th</sup> president in 1860, America faced its greatest constitutional test. How could a country founded on the belief that "all men are created equal" continue to tolerate slavery in its Constitution?

Lincoln insisted that America live up to its best traditions – the ideal of liberty and even equality for all. He knew that the nation had not yet measured up. And so at Gettysburg, he challenged Americans to take up the "unfinished work" of creating a "newbirth of freedom." Lincoln's words have echoed down the decades, speaking to what he termed on another occasion "the better angels of our nature." His deeds, his sacrifice are a legacy we all share.

This exhibit was organized by the National Constitution Center and the American Library Association, and made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. SHSND has partnered with the National Park Service to bring this exhibit to Williston, North Dakota.

Sponsored in partnership with:



NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE  
HUMANITIES

**ALA** American  
Library  
Association

## Friends of Fort Union/Fort Buford 2011 Fellowship awarded to Arch Ellwein

Arch Ellwein of Sidney, MT was selected for the Fort Union/Fort Buford Fellowship for 2011. He is researching the Fisk Wagon Train that of 1862-1867. These trains ventured from Minnesota to the gold fields of present day Montana. This history binds not only Fort Union and Fort Buford, as Fisk used each as a supply and rest point but also the confluence and the Civil War. Ellwein's interest in Fisk wagon trains is to uncover an aspect of history that is often overlooked due to the events surrounding it. "Many intersecting and significant events are lost in the fog of history, obscured by other events, and this is the case of the Northern Plains Wagon Trains. It's and adventure story of politics, greed and danger and a pioneer story of courage, grit and hope" Ellwein will be presenting on his finding in three free community events.



**Williston Public Library, Williston, ND: October 22<sup>nd</sup> at 2pmCT**  
**MonDak Heritage Center, Sidney, MT : November 15 at 7pm MT**  
**Missouri Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center: November 19 at 4:00 PM**



# Indian Arts Showcase 2011

## Art and Science at Fort Union



Dr. Janine Pease presented "The Stars we Know - Native American Astronomy." Dr. Janine Pease, member of the Crow Nation talked of the importance and mythology of the Plains Indians in relation to the stars. Photo courtesy of Kris Baxter

This years Indian Arts Showcase highlighted the arts and sciences at Fort Union. George Horse Capture invited visitors to see George Catlin through the Native American view-point. Through critique of Catlin's paintings Horse Capture showed a Catlin that painted ceremonies and traditions that still resonate today, such as the Mandan Okeepa Ceremony. Science at Fort Union was superbly covered by Dr, Janine Pease using Native American Astronomy oral history and myths to show a culture's very strong understanding of the world around them. Via Crow and others tribes, cosmology she examined the

*(Continued on page 11)*



Mr. George Horse Capture is from the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation in north central Montana and is a member of the A'aninin (White Clay or Gros Ventre) tribe. His talk focused on the Native American Views of George Catlin who traveled through the Upper Missouri in 1832. Photo courtesy Kris Baxter



Tatanka Oyate performed drum music accompanying the New Town Eagle Feather Dancers. Photo courtesy Kris Baxter



One of the New Town Eagle Feather Dancers entertains the crowd. Photo courtesy Kris Baxter



New Town Eagle Feathers proved very popular with visitors. Photo courtesy Kris Baxter



Vincent Albanese with woodcarving and quillwork. Photo courtesy Kris Baxter



New Town Eagle Feather Dancer. Photo courtesy Kris Baxter



Visitors examine sales items. Photo courtesy Kris Baxter



Artisan Marla Yellow Bird shows her wares of Photo courtesy Kris Baxter



Josh Albanese with hand carved bows for sale. Photo courtesy Kris Baxter



Vendor Joe McGillis showcasing various traditional items. Photo courtesy Kris Baxter

Next Years Indian Arts Showcase will be on  
August 3-4, 2011



# Labor Day Weekend Last Bell Tours



1—The engages (manual laborers of the fort) take a break from hauling steamboat freight to discuss a very loud bang heard from somewhere up river, and talk of the outbreak of what will become the Civil War

This year's Last Bell Tours dealt with two explosive topics in 1861, one figuratively and one literally. Two steamboats The Chippewa and The Spread Eagle had been tied up at Fort Union and discharged tons of AMFC cargo. More distressingly they also brought up word that the Civil War had broken out back east inflaming tensions and creating disturbances at Fort Union between southern and northern employees. After discharging goods the Steamboat Spread Eagle turned around and headed back to St. Louis, the Chippewa headed further up river to Fort Benton. Traveling onboard the Chippewa was Charles Chouteau, acting head of the American Fur Company, also onboard was approximately 300 barrels of gunpowder near were 22 barrels of alcohol. Unfortunately a member of the deck crew had been helping himself to alcohol and was a bit careless with his candle and became in essence a human torch. Luckily the boat engineer was able to nudge the smoking ship close to shore

*(Continued on page 11)*



2—Trader Dave Carr and Clerk Randy Kane discuss their very different opinions of whether or not the South should have succeeded. Considering Carr is portraying a southerner from Nashville and Kane an Iowan this caused a lot of harsh words and even a threat of physical violence!



3—The Clerks of Fort Union, portrayed by Richard Stenberg and Woody Searles discuss the political ramifications of the newly elected Republican Abraham Lincoln. Considering the owners of the American Fur Company were slave owning Democrats the ramification were plenty.



4—Fort Bourgeois Robert Meldrum is aghast at the news of the Steamboat Chippewa explosion and narrow escape of American Fur Company President Charles Chouteau.



5—Charles Chouteau (portrayed by Rod Lassey) and Fort Hunter (Chris Floyd) relate their narrow escape from the Chippewa's' explosion and the loss of trade goods.



(Continued from page 10)

and passengers quickly found refuge in nearby cottonwood grove. While the passengers watched, the ship with all their possessions and AMFC inventory burned to the waterline and then exploded with a tremendous blast. There were only two casualties from the disaster the unlucky deck hand and a dog. Charles Chouteau sent an employee upstream to Fort Benton for extra ox carts to transport goods from Fort Union to Fort Benton while he headed downstream to notify Fort Union of the disaster and look at options for trade goods for the coming season.

(Continued from page 9)

celestial bodies in the Northern Plains cosmos. Back again at Fort Union were the New Town Eagle Feather Dancers accompanied by the traditional drum group Tatanka Oyate they performed various traditional dances

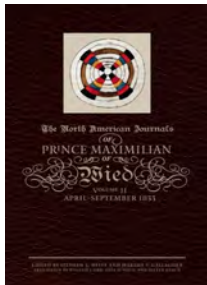


## FORT UNION & FORT BUFORD BOOKSTORES OFFER NEW PUBLICATIONS

**The North American Journals of Prince Maximilian of Wied, Volume 2, April-September 1833**, Edited by: Stephen S. Witte, Marsha V. Gallagher, Translated by: William J. Orr, Paul Schach, Dieter Karch

The most complete record of this major expedition ever to appear in English

Few historical chronicles are as informative and eloquent as the journal written by Prince Maximilian of Wied as a record of his journey into the North American interior in 1833, following the route Lewis and Clark had taken almost thirty years earlier. Maximilian's memorable descriptions of topography, Native peoples, and natural history were further brought to life through the now-familiar watercolors and sketches of Karl Bodmer, the young Swiss artist who accompanied him.



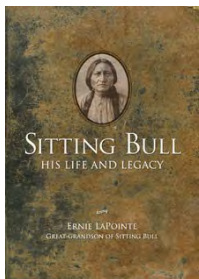
Volume II vividly narrates his experiences on the upper Missouri and offers an unparalleled view of the region and the peoples native to it. In these pages, we accompany Maximilian as he travels far up the Missouri River to Fort McKenzie, a trading post some 2,500 river miles from St. Louis near what is now Fort Benton, Montana. The handsome, oversize volume not only reproduces this historic document but also features every one of Maximilian's illustrations—more than 200 in all, including nearly 50 in color—from the original journal now housed at Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha, Nebraska.

Maximilian recorded detailed observations of flora, fauna, geology, and climate. From his unique, scientifically trained perspective, he also undertook a serious field study of the cultures and languages of the central and northern Great Plains Indians he encountered. His journal contains important, firsthand descriptions of tribal social customs, religious rituals, material culture, and art, as well as an account of Native interactions with Euro-Americans engaged in the then-burgeoning fur trade.

**Sold at: Fort Union Trading Post for \$85.00 (limited edition printing)**

**Sitting Bull: His Life and Legacy** by Ernie LaPointe

Never before has the story of Sitting Bull been written and published by a lineal descendant. In *Sitting Bull: His Life and Legacy*, Ernie LaPointe, a great-grandson of the famous Hunkpapa Lakota chief, presents the family tales and memories told to him about his great-grandfather. LaPointe not only recounts the rich oral history of his family—the stories of Sitting Bull's childhood, his reputation as a fierce warrior, his growth into a sage and devoted leader of his people, and the betrayal that led to his murder—but also explains what it means to be Lakota in the time of Sitting Bull and now. In many ways the oral history differs from what has become the standard and widely accepted biography of Sitting Bull. LaPointe explains the discrepancies, how they occurred, and why he wants to tell his story of Tatanka Iyotake. This book is powerful. It is a story of Native American history, told by a Native American, for all people to better understand a culture, a leader, and a man.



ERNIE LAPOINTE, a great-grandson of Sitting Bull, was born on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota. He is a Sun Dancer who lives the traditional way of the Lakota and follows the rules of the sacred pipe. LaPointe and his wife, Sonja, live in South Dakota.

**Sold at: The Missouri Yellowstone Confluence Interpretive Center for \$19.95**

#### Fort Union Trading Post's National Significance:

Fort Union was the most important fur trading post on the Upper Missouri from 1828-1867 as a center of peaceful economic and social exchange between Northern Plains Indians and Euro-Americans. Northern Plains Indian tribes—Assiniboiné, Crow, Cree, Ojibwa, Blackfeet, Hidatsa, Mandan and Arikara, among others —traded buffalo robes and other furs for trade goods such as beads, guns, blankets, knives, kettles and cloth.

[www.nps.fous](http://www.nps.fous)

#### Fort Buford National Significance:

Fort Buford State Historic Site preserves remnants of a vital frontier plains military post. Fort Buford protected the confluence of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers, and became a major supply depot for Plains Indian Wars military field operations.

<http://history.nd.gov/historicsites/buford/index.html>

#### Upcoming Events:

Cemetery Walk—Fort Buford—October 22nd 7-9pm

Engage Christmas—Fort Union—December 3-4th

#### Next Season:

Rendezvous—Fort Union—June 14-17th

Indian Arts—Fort Union—August 4-5th

Fort Buford Encampment—Fort Buford—To Be Announced

Living History Weekend—Fort Union—September 1-3



*Promoting the history of the Missouri-Yellowstone Confluence area since 1984*

**Friends of Fort Union/Fort Buford**  
15550 Highway 1804  
Williston, ND 58801